

Testimony In Favor of Establishing an Office of Community Gun Violence Prevention

Thank you to the Appropriation Committee, to you Representative **Felipe**, Co-Chairs - Senator Osten and Representative Walker; Vice Chairs - Hartley, Dathan and Nolan and to ranking members Miner and France; and all respected committee members, for allowing me this time to speak to you today. My name is Joe Baker, a private citizen and resident of New Milford.

I am testifying in support of the \$3.6 million included in the Governor's budget adjustment bill for the Department of Public Health to fund gun violence prevention programs and to support the establishment of an Office of Community Gun Violence Prevention here in Connecticut.

I moved to northwest Connecticut in the 1980's, hoping to build a family in what I believed was an idyllic environment in many ways, but importantly, safe from gun violence.

My naive Pollyanna feelings of safety were shattered on December 14, 2012, when my niece, a cute little first grader at Sandy Hook Elementary, was in her classroom across the hall from where many of her fellow 1st graders were slaughtered by gun violence. It was a wake-up call to say the least.

I now know, what many of you had already known, that gun violence is everywhere in Connecticut. We all have heard the statistics. 2/3 of gun deaths are related to suicide, with much of the remainder related to community gun violence. Gun violence happens every day in Connecticut.

This is a complicated problem with many complex facets, that needs solutions that go beyond individual pieces of legislation, as good and appreciated, as they are.

It deserves continual attention, to help move us toward significant reduction of this near pandemic in our communities.

It deserves continual attention, because lives are continually being lost to this scourge on our communities.

It deserves continual attention, which would come from a permanent place at the highest levels of our State Government.

It deserves an Office of Community Gun Violence Prevention at the State Capital.

Please support this important initiative to save lives in our communities. Our lives!

Thank you for your time and attention. It is much appreciated.

Joe Baker
New Milford